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From: Sachi A. Hamai
Interim Chief Executive Officer

SACRAMENTO UPDATE

Executive Summary

This memorandum contains a report on the following:

- **Pursuit of County Position on a State Budget Item.** The County Welfare Directors Association (CWDA) is pursuing a proposal to provide increased funding of \$30.2 million statewide in FY 2015-16 for relative and foster parent recruitment, retention and support to help foster children placed with kin caregivers and foster parents, increase placements in family-based settings, and ensure an adequate supply of high quality foster families and relative caregivers. Therefore, unless otherwise directed by the Board, consistent with existing policy to support proposals to increase foster care resources and ensure professionalizing foster parenting, **the Sacramento advocates will support the proposal to provide \$30.2 million in increased funding for relative and foster parent recruitment, retention and support to help foster children placed with kin caregivers and foster parents, increase placements in family-based settings, and ensure an adequate supply of high quality foster families and relative caregivers.**

Pursuit of County Position on a State Budget Item

The County Welfare Directors Association (CWDA) is pursuing a proposal to provide increased funding of \$30.2 million in State General Fund (SGF) in FY 2015-16 for relative and foster parent recruitment, retention and support. The program is currently budgeted at \$2.5 million and would increase to a total of \$32.7 million statewide under the proposal.

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The additional funding would help provide direct support to foster children placed with kin caregivers and foster parents, increase placements in family-based settings, and ensure an adequate supply of high quality foster families and relative caregivers given the significant need.

Background

Under current State and Federal law, counties are mandated to first consider placement with a relative before a child is placed into foster care due to abuse and neglect. When a relative placement cannot be found, State law requires that county licensed foster homes be considered as the next priority for placement. According to CWDA, counties have seen a steady decline in the number of licensed foster family homes since 2003.

Currently, only \$2.5 million is available for kin caregiver and county licensed foster parent support. The Governor's FY 2015-16 Proposed Budget includes a \$2.8 million statewide increase for foster care recruitment, retention and support as part of the Administration's Continuum of Care Reform recommendations. However, CWDA and the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) note that additional funding is needed for relative and foster parent recruitment, retention and support which has been woefully inadequate and stagnant for over a decade.

County Welfare Directors Association Budget Proposal

The County Welfare Directors Association's proposal for increased funding of \$30.2 million statewide in FY 2015-16 would help provide support for: 1) county staff and coordinators working with foster parents; 2) foster parents who support other foster parents and participate in training and coaching; 3) recruitment materials and activities; 4) increase supplemental rates for emergency foster care placement; and 5) foster youth participation in activities with their peers, including extra-curricular activities such as sports, and other expenses including graduation activities, school projects, and test fees for higher education, which are not currently factored into the basic foster care rate. Additionally, this proposal would support continued implementation of the Resource Family Approval process which is a key strategy of the Continuum of Care Reform to support family-based placements.

County Impact

The Department of Children and Family Services indicates that there is a significant need for increased funding for relative and foster parent recruitment, retention and support, especially with the loss of nearly 50 percent of foster home placement options in the County since 2007. The available home placements were reduced from 6,500 foster homes with 18,000 beds to now only 3,700 foster homes with 9,200 beds. In recent years, DCFS has

been challenged with a decreasing number of foster homes, especially for infants, toddlers, and children with special needs. Furthermore, there are approximately 18,000 children in the County in out-of-home care, and the County alone has about 3,000 separate foster caregivers.

According to the Department of Children and Family Services, CWDA's proposal for increased funding would help to recruit and train professional foster parents which continues to be an urgent undertaking for the Department. Improving foster home rates and developing supportive services would encourage more people to become foster parents. Additionally, targeted recruitment of high quality foster parents would increase the pool of available homes and help serve the best interests of children placed in out-of-home care.

Conclusion

This office and the Department of Children and Family Services support CWDA's proposal. Therefore, unless otherwise directed by the Board, consistent with existing policy to support proposals to increase foster care resources and ensure professionalizing foster parenting, **the Sacramento advocates will support the proposal to provide \$30.2 million in increased funding statewide in FY 2015-16 for relative and foster parent recruitment, retention and support to help foster children placed with kin caregivers and foster parents, increase placements in family-based settings, and ensure an adequate supply of high quality foster families and relative caregivers.**

The proposal is supported by the California State Association of Counties; the counties of Alameda, San Mateo, and Ventura; and the Service Employees International Union; among others. There is no known opposition at this time.

The proposal is scheduled to be considered in the Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Subcommittee No. 3 on Health and Human Services on April 9, 2015.

We will continue to keep you advised.

SAH:JJ:MR
OR:lm

c: All Department Heads
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